

# ACCELERATE YOUR KEYBOARD PLAYING



## FEATURING DAVE LIMINA

This DVD will help take your playing to the next level. Professor Dave Limina shares his proven method for improving the fundamental skills required to build your harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic vocabulary in blues, rock, funk, and jazz styles. Professor Limina has been teaching at Berklee College of Music since 1993 and continues to be one of the most sought after and effective piano and keyboard lab instructors. His performance credits include a stint as the conductor and keyboardist for the Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize winning musical *Rent*, and he has shared the stage with such notables as B.B. King, Chuck Berry, Mighty Sam McClain, Martha Reeves, Brooke Benton, and Paula Cole, to name a few.

This DVD offers easy-to-understand exercises and demonstrations that can be applied to all levels and styles. These include: • SCALE AND BLUES TECHNIQUES • EAR TRAINING • ROCK AND BLUES PHRASING • TWO-HAND GROOVES FOR FUNK, TEXAS SHUFFLE, ROOTS-ROCK, AND LATIN STYLES • JAZZ VOICINGS AND RHYTHMS

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

# ACCELERATE Your KEYBOARD PLAYING

EXERCISES AND TIPS TO MAKE  
YOU BETTER—FASTER

Featuring Dave Limina



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## INTRODUCTION

In this DVD I will demonstrate some fundamental exercises taken from actual lessons and classes given at Berklee. I have carefully chosen each exercise to help build your harmonic, melodic and rhythmic vocabulary in blues, rock, funk and jazz styles. All of the exercises and concepts are drawn from my experience as a professional musician. I have tried to make them as musical as possible.

As you work through the exercises try to emphasize the rhythmic feel and the specifics of each style that I point out in the booklet. If you are able to master the exercises quickly transpose them to other keys. Make sure that you read through the booklet as you watch the DVD as I provide detailed explanations of each exercise and ways to practice.

Some of the exercises are intended to be more challenging than others. Be patient, work at your own pace. These exercises have proven to be effective through my years as a teacher at Berklee.

I also try to stress the importance of expression and rhythmic feel in these exercises. I have found that when studying improvisational styles many student piano players tend to focus more on harmony and neglect feel and time. The majority of music that is popular employs very limited use of harmony. It is your feel that will get you noticed in these styles.

I tried very carefully to balance fun licks that everyone craves with solid fundamental techniques and concepts. It has been my experience that you can be expressive and musical at any level of proficiency. Try to be satisfied with the level that you are at, this is the key to musical freedom. I have encountered many students with great amounts of technique and harmonic knowledge that are very unsatisfying to listen to. The opposite is very true. So be true to your own abilities and have fun with my DVD.

LET'S GET STARTED!!

## **PART 1**

### **Scales and Blues Techniques**

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Part 1 of this DVD deals with mixolydian and blues harmony and blues technique.

Exercises 1 through 4 give an example of the harmonic environment of blues, rock and funk styles. It is important to understand the theory behind what your ears are hearing. From these scales we can derive melodic and harmonic "comping" material. ("comping" is an improvised accompaniment based on the harmony and rhythm of the piece of music) "Crushed" notes are a really just grace notes. In these styles grace notes are often played with the same finger sliding from one key to the next. Blues trills and crushed notes will be used throughout the exercises.

Blues technique exercises are applicable to rock and funk also, they appear in a blues setting here. Follow the instructions carefully as you can adjust the level of difficulty to suit your present ability. Be careful not to strain your hands while practicing these exercises. Your hands should be loose and relaxed, stop if you are experiencing pain. These "technique" exercises are designed to teach licks and hand position for phrasing as well as develop hand strength. The goal is to learn the harmonic and melodic vocabulary of the styles. These exercises are a good beginning.

Exercise 7 is an example of triads used in all of these styles. Many great players use these to create comping patterns. Make sure that you understand the mixolydian derivation of these triads as they function within the harmony of a dominant 7th chord. They are really just another way to play a dom. 7 chord.

Do not use any pedal in these exercises.

Exercise 8 is a combination of techniques covered thus far. Try to emphasize the blues shuffle feel in your performance of the tune.

Have fun!!!



## Example: Mixolydian Scale

The image shows a musical staff with a treble and bass clef. On the left, a C7 chord is shown with a flat sign (b) and the label 'C7'. To the right, the C Mixolydian scale is written out, starting on middle C (C4) and ending on B3. The notes are: C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb. Below the notes, the scale degrees are labeled: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, b7.

C mixolydian harmony is based on a C7 chord.

The C mixolydian scale is essentially a C major scale with a flat-  
ted 7th.

Blues styles consist of mixolydian harmony.

This "chord scale" serves as a basis for melodic and comping  
material.

## exercise 1

### mixolydian scale exercise

The image shows a musical staff with a treble and bass clef. The exercise is written in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as 'half note = 55'. The exercise consists of two measures. The first measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The second measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The exercise is written in a key signature of one flat (Bb).

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise will familiarize you with mixolydian harmony. It will also give you a sense of hand position relevant to blues and rock styles.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play this exercise with your hands in unison with the metronome on 2&4; this will help you to internalize the time feel.
- Also play the exercise in the key of F, Bb and G. These are good keys to get started with in blues and rock styles.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- It is important to play the exercise in several keys. When you can play the first 4 keys well, try playing them in succession without stopping.
- Make sure that you try to play with a "blues shuffle" or "swing feel".

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- If you are able to quickly execute the exercise in 4 keys try playing through all 12 keys in succession following the circle of 5ths. (C/F/Bb/Eb/Ab, etc.)

## exercise2

### mixolydian motives

half note =55

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise will familiarize you with how notes from the mixolydian scale can be used to create motives and melodies.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Try to transpose these 8 bars to F, B $\flat$ , and G.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Make sure that you play with a swing feel.
- Notice how the motives phrase to either the fifth or first degree of the scale.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- When you listen to music see if you can recognize simple motives like these. Try to play them back in the same key that you are listening to.

## Example: Blues Scale

scale degrees.

This is an example of a "blues scale" in the key of C.

I think it is important not to think of this as a scale in the traditional sense. We rarely, when performing music, execute the above notes in scalar order; the result is often unmusical. I like to think of the above example as a "set of notes" that can be used to create phrases.

Remember that any theoretical explanation of music is based on what was heard first. Not the other way around. When you listen to blues listen for motives and phrases that use notes from this "scale".

## exercise3

### blues scale exercise

half note = 55

The musical score for Exercise 3 is written for piano in 2/4 time. It consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system shows the beginning of the exercise with a repeat sign. The second system continues the scale. The third system shows the end of the exercise with a repeat sign and a box labeled '4 x's' above the final measure. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 below the notes.

## MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise will familiarize you with what I call "blues phrasing position". That is the position that your hands are in above the keyboard and the fingerings that provide the most strength for executing music in this style.

## WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Play with both hands together or hands separately.
- Try to use the suggested fingering; if this is uncomfortable for you it is okay to use your own. I have found that this fingering works well with most students.
- Transpose the exercise to F, B $\flat$ , G and all keys eventually.

## IMPORTANT POINTS

- Make sure that you play with a "shuffle" feel.
- The fingering will not be the same as you move through different keys, so you may adjust it accordingly.

## ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try changing the tempo or playing along with a recording in the same key.
- When you play along with a recording try to approximate the feel of the band you are listening to. Try to blend in.

## exercise4

### blues scale motives

half note = 65

*mf*

C7

F7

C7

G7

F7

C7

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise will familiarize you with the use of melodic motives from the blues scale. It also incorporates some left hand syncopation.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome of 2&4.
- Make sure that you emphasize the shuffle feel.
- Try to use the suggested fingering.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- I only play this one twice through on the DVD, you may repeat more times if you wish.
- Practice hands separately if you need to.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to incorporate the accents in your playing.
- This exercise can be performed like an actual tune.



## exercise5a

### "crushed notes"



## exercise5c

### blues motives with "crushed notes"

Exercise 5c, measures 1-3. The notation shows a 12-bar blues structure. Measures 1-3 are in the key of C major (C7 chord). The melody in the treble clef features "crushed" notes (flattened) on G, A, and B. The bass line consists of a simple two-note pattern (C and F) in the bass clef.

Exercise 5c, measures 4-6. The notation continues the 12-bar blues structure. Measures 4-6 are in the key of G major (G7 and F7 chords). The melody in the treble clef features "crushed" notes (flattened) on G, A, and B. The bass line consists of a simple two-note pattern (C and F) in the bass clef.

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise gives you example of practical use of "crushed" notes and grace notes in a 12 bar blues tune.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play this exercise like you are performing a blues tune.
- Metronome on 2&4.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Pay special attention to how you execute the "crushed" and grace notes. Try to make them sound authentic.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- In the DVD I only play the exercise onetime through. Feel free to play it through twice each time you practice.

## exercise6a

blues technique with "Chicago" style left hand, key C

half note=55

### MAIN PURPOSE

- Blues technique exercises will familiarize you with the blues, rock, and funk vocabulary.
- They are intended to be repetitive in order to build the hand strength necessary to execute phrasing that is stylistically accurate.
- This is another example of a "Chicago" style left hand part.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4 several times through.
- Make sure that you play with the proper "shuffle" feel.
- Transpose this exercise to F, B $\flat$ , and G.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Be careful not to strain your hands when practicing this exercise. Keep your hands relaxed and loose over the keyboard.
- If you feel your hands getting tight stop and rest for a while.
- When you can play the first 4 keys try the other 8. I often play blues in keys like B and C $\sharp$ .

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- I have provided a suggested fingering again. If you use another fingering remember that the goal is to execute phrasing with strong fingers.
- On the DVD I end the exercise--you should continue several times through.

## exercise6b

blues technique with "Chicago" style left hand, key G

half note = 55

G7

C7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This is another exercise intended to increase vocabulary and develop hand strength.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4 several times through.
- Make sure that you play with the proper "shuffle" feel.
- Transpose to C, F, and B $\flat$ .

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Again be careful not to strain your hands.
- Notice how these licks phrase to the root of the key.

half note = 55

G7

D7

C7

G7

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- When you get the first 4 keys down try the rest.
- Make sure that you strive for accuracy and good feel.
- Don't rush through these blues technique exercises. There is much more to them than just the notes.



## exercise 6c

blues technique with "Texas" style bass line, key C

half note = 55

Measures 1-4 of exercise 6c. The first system (measures 1-2) is marked with a C7 chord. The second system (measures 3-4) is marked with an F7 chord. The bass line is a 'Texas' style walking bass line, characterized by a steady eighth-note pattern with occasional grace notes and slurs. The piano part features 'crushed' notes and grace notes in the right hand.

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This is another blues technique exercise. This one incorporates the use of "crushed" notes and employs a "Texas" style walking bass line.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Again play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4 with the proper shuffle feel.
- Play several times through. Then progress through the other keys as you learn.

Measures 5-8 of exercise 6c. The first system (measures 5-6) is marked with a C7 chord. The second system (measures 7-8) is marked with a G7 chord. The bass line continues with the 'Texas' style walking bass line. The piano part continues with 'crushed' notes and grace notes.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Play the bass notes slightly detached, but not staccato. This will help your left hand to emulate the sound of an acoustic bass. It also helps "drive" the swing feel.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Be careful to properly execute the "crushed" notes and grace notes. It is important that they help the motives speak.
- Remember that when phrasing in these styles we are often trying to emulate the pitch bending of blues singers.

## exercise6d

blues technique with "Texas" style bass line, key G

half note = 55

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is designed to develop your ability to play eighth note triplets against a quarter note bass line.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play this exercise as you played the previous three; metronome on 2&4 with a good shuffle feel, progress through the keys.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- This one may cause your right hand to get tired relatively quickly; remember to stay loose and to stop if you experience too much discomfort.

- Playing music is not about forcing some technical act. If you play what you "hear" you should be able to execute with ease things that may have appeared to be technically complex at one time.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Continue to work on all 4 Blues technique exercises. You can combine them if you wish. Try to create a solo performance in a few keys with licks from the exercises. If they are swinging they will sound very authentic.

## exercise7

### blues comping with mixolydian triads

Shuffle C7 half note=55

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise will introduce you to Mixolydian triads. These triads are made up of notes from the Mixolydian and Blues scales. There are many different triads that can be used for comping. The two that appear in this exercise are widely used in blues, rock, and funk styles.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Start by playing the exercise with the metronome on 2&4 with a shuffle feel.
- Transpose to the other keys starting with F, G and Bb.
- Try to create your own comping patterns with these triads. Try them in different inversions.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Within the context of Mixolydian harmony these are two minor triads built on the fifth and sixth of the chord (Dmin and Emin played over G7 harmony, Gmin and Amin built over C7 harmony).

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- The pattern in this exercise works great for comping behind a solo or a melody on a blues shuffle.

## exercise8

blues tune #1, key G

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is a blues tune that is made up of several devices we just covered. It will demonstrate to you how these techniques can be combined.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play this exercise like an actual blues tune to be performed.
- Try to transpose it to a few other keys.
- Play with the metronome on 2&4.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Remember that this tune is full of harmonic and rhythmic devices from the standard blues vocabulary. The introduction and "turn-around" lick are also standard.
- Transpose this to other keys as it should be part of your vocabulary of licks.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Make sure you play with a good shuffle feel.



## **PART 2**

### **Ear Training, Rock and Blues Phrasing**

In part 2 we will cover a few ways to practice ear training. I can't emphasize enough how vital it is to make ear training a part of your practice everytime you play music. There simply are no great musicians that do not possess highly developed ears. I have found that many great musicians had highly efficient practice routines. Many of them were doing ear training and didn't even know it. I can think of many examples of people simply playing along with recordings; learning solos, voicings, melodies, chord changes, etc. They thought they were just having fun learning tunes, but they were developing the quintessential skill involved with making music; ear training.

The problem that occurs in the learning process is that teachers that are accomplished players often take their ears for granted. Once developed your ears will never fail you. Students tend to focus on the tangible aspects of learning music like, sight reading, theory and technique. These things are analogous to tools and language, but they don't provide content. The music comes from your inner hearing. This explains why there are so many inspirational musicians that never studied music formally. They may not be able to read music but they sure can play. Many teaching methods focus on the tangible technical things or use ear training exercises that are out of context. The fact is that all those illiterate great players did study at one point. They studied what they were hearing with their ears.

In the following exercises we will deal with one part of developing your ears; the ability to recognize and play back melodic fragments or "motives." Melodic material is made up of intervals. Recognizing intervals is the first step. Even if you can't instantly recognize them by name you should be able to play them back on your instrument. Play the intervals in the examples preceding exercise 9 and 10. Learn to associate their sound with familiar melodies or licks. There are a few intervals that occur often in the blues and rock vocabulary. The following exercises will help you become familiar with how they sound and how they feel to play.

The second half of part 2 will expose you to more elements of blues/rock vocabulary. Mixolydian thirds are great for creating licks. You can use them in parts of your solos or in your comping. The 4 keys that I provided work with a natural fingering. I have heard players play these in other keys, but the fingering can be more challenging. Try to memorize these licks and make them part of your style.

## Example: Intervals within the Mixolydian scale

Major 2nd. Major 3rd. Perfect 4th. Perfect 5th. major 6th. Minor 7th.

Here are some intervals that are diatonic to the Mixolydian scale.

It is important to have the ability to recognize the sound of these intervals within motives. A good way to train your ears for this kind of recognition is to start with blues and rock motives.

## exercise9

### understanding intervals within the mixolydian scale

half note =55

maj.3 P5

P4 P5 min.7

maj.3 P4 min.7 P5

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise demonstrates how Mixolydian motives and phrases can be harmonized with certain intervals.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4 in time. Then play the exercise and stop on each of the labeled intervals. Arpeggiate them and sing them with and without the piano.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- These intervals are the starting point for developing your inner melodic hearing. Whether you are improvising a phrase or trying to play back a lick you heard, it's the same thing--you are using your inner hearing.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to recognize intervals when you are listening to music. Stop the recording and sing what you are hearing, and check your recognition on your instrument.

## Example: Intervals within the Blues scale

minor 3rd. perfect 4th. aug. 4 dim. 5th perfect 5th maj. 6th minor 7th

Here are a few intervals found within blues harmony.

## exercise 10

understanding intervals within the blues scale

half note =55

P.4

min. 3rd

P.5

dim. 5th

maj. 6th.

dim. 5th

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise demonstrates how blues motives and phrases can be harmonized with certain intervals.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise in time with the metronome on 2&4. Then stop on each labeled interval. Arpeggiate them and sing them with and without the piano.

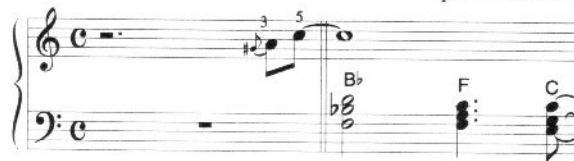
### IMPORTANT POINTS

- These licks are also standard blues licks that you can add to your vocabulary.

## exercise 11

### rock motives and phrases, key C

quarter note= 117



#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise demonstrates blues/rock motives in the context of a rock vamp.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on the quarter note.
- You may play it hands separately at first and then combine them.



#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Be careful to properly execute the "crushed" notes.
- Notice how the motives resolve to the key of C.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to improvise your own motives while playing the left hand vamp.

## exercise 12a-c

rock "call and response" #1-3, key C

1 quarter note = 117

"call"

"response"

"call"

"response"

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise demonstrates blues/rock motives in the context of a rock vamp.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on the quarter note.
- You may play it hands separately at first then combine.

"call"

"response"

"call"

"response"

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Be careful to properly execute the "crushed" notes.
- Notice how the motives resolve to the key of C.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to improvise your own motives while playing the left hand vamp.

2

"call"

"response"

"call"

"response"

"call"

"response"

"call"

"response"

3

"call"

"response"

"call"

"response"

"call"

Measure 3: Right hand: quarter rest, eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, quarter note C5. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

Measure 4: Right hand: quarter rest. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

Measure 5: Right hand: eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, quarter note C5. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

Measure 6: Right hand: quarter rest. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

Measure 7: Right hand: eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, quarter note C5. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

"response"

"call"

"response"

"call"

"response"

Measure 8: Right hand: quarter rest. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

Measure 9: Right hand: eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, quarter note C5. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

Measure 10: Right hand: quarter rest. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

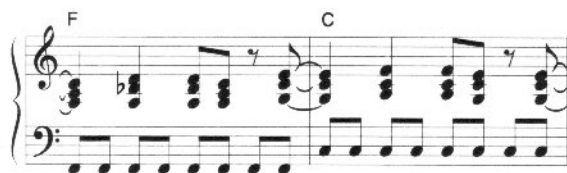
Measure 11: Right hand: eighth notes G4, A4, Bb4, quarter note C5. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.

Measure 12: Right hand: quarter rest. Left hand: quarter note Bb3, quarter note F3, quarter note C4.



## exercise 13

### rock comping



### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is an example of straight eighth note rock comping. It is important to be able to play the syncopated right hand rhythms against the straight eighth bass line.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on the quarter note.
- Make sure that you play with an aggressive rock feel.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Listen to where I place the accents in the DVD. Try to get a similar feel when you play.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- This kind of groove is not as easy as it may seem. Try recording yourself and listen back to see how you are doing.

## exercise 14

rock/blues phrasing technique, key G

**Slow Blues**

half note = 42

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is a slow blues that demonstrates the position that your hands are in when playing phrases that sound like authentic blues and rock licks.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Perform the exercise like a slow blues tune with the metronome on 42.
- Try to emulate the feel that I play within the DVD or any authentic slow blues that you know.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Notice the position of your hands when playing the exercise.

- You should begin to associate the sounds you're making with how it feels in your hands. The goal is to let the music phrase through your hands.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Notice how the phrases resolve to the root or the fifth of the chord.

## exercise 15

mixolydian thirds, key G

quarter note = 140

Musical score for Exercise 15, first system. It features a piano accompaniment in G major with a descending thirds pattern in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand. The right hand starts with a G7 chord and a descending line of eighth notes: G4, F#4, E4, D4, C#4, B3, A3, G3. The left hand plays a series of G2 and B2 octaves. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 140.

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise demonstrates another standard blues/rock device. This descending thirds pattern is great to have in your vocabulary of ideas.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Pay careful attention to the fingering.
- You may try it hands separately at first then hands together. You may try at slower tempo at first.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try playing this exercise with a straight eighth feel also.
- The note heads that are x's are "ghost notes"; these notes are usually not fully attacked, they are implied.

Musical score for Exercise 15, second system. It continues the piano accompaniment from the first system. The right hand features a descending thirds pattern with G7, D7, and C7 chords. The left hand continues with a steady bass line. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 140.

## exercise 16

mixolydian thirds, key C

quarter note = 140

C7

C7

F7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This is another example of the Mixolydian thirds lick in the key of C this time.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try this one with a straight eighth note feel also.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- This lick works better in certain keys. C, F, G and B<sup>b</sup> are a few. You may have to experiment with fingerings to make this work in keys like B and A<sup>b</sup>.

C7

G7

F7

C7

G7

## exercise 16

### mixolydian thirds, key C

quarter note = 140

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This is another example of the Mixolydian thirds lick in the key of C this time.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try this one with a straight eighth note feel also.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- This lick works better in certain keys. C, F, G and B $\flat$  are a few. You may have to experiment with fingerings to make this work in keys lick B and A $\flat$ .

## exercise 17

mixolydian thirds, key F

straight eighth notes      F7      quarter note = 150

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This is another example of the Mixolydian thirds lick in the key of F this time.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try this one with a swing feel also.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- This lick is good practice for straight eighth note rock and roll piano playing.

## exercise 18

mixolydian thirds, key B $\flat$

Swing

half note = 65

B $\flat$ 7

E $\flat$ 7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is the Mixolydian thirds lick in B $\flat$  with a walking bass line.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try the other keys with a walking bass line like this one.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to make this one swing. This is great practice for bass line independence.

B $\flat$ 7

F7

E7

B7 B $\flat$ 7



## **PART3**

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### **2 Hand Grooves**

Part 3 is designed to develop independence between the hands. It is important to have the ability to play syncopated rhythms in each hand simultaneously. The following exercises cover many styles that involve 2 hand syncopation. Piano players have the added challenge of making 2 different parts sound like one. The "up" side to this is that the possibilities become much greater. We can create limitless interesting ideas at the keyboard.

When you are working on part 3 don't be intimidated by the complexity of some of the exercises. Remember that it is the musical idea that you are trying to convey. This is far more important than the just the execution of the notes. There will always be players with greater technical ability than you. The first goal when performing should be to play some music. Be musical and creative. If these exercises are too hard for you at first play them hands separately for a while. For a year if you have to. Try them at slower tempos or break them down into smaller sections. It's okay to switch to just one hand during a part that you find particularly difficult. Put the exercises together slowly.

When you can execute the notes hands together start to listen and feel the groove. Avoid the instinct to speed up. Many students simply rush through the notes when they have learned a piece of music. This should be a warning sign that you are missing the musical point of the piece. You may try recording yourself and listening back. This should let you hear where you are laying the time and if you are grooving.

The funk technique exercises will provide you with a technical starting point to create your own funk style. Pay careful attention to how I execute the "ghost" notes in the exercises. "Ghost" notes are notes that are not played firmly enough to fully speak. They can be used to create a percussive effect that is vital to keyboard funk. Watch how I use many "ghost" notes with the first finger of each hand. This is where the "Funk" is. Also experiment with different dynamic levels between the hands and between different sections of the exercises. Remember there is much more depth to playing music than execution of the notes.

Notice in these exercises that you are utilizing many of the harmonic ideas from parts 1 and 2.

## exercise 19

"Texas shuffle" comping, key B $\flat$

half note=55

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is a typical "Texas" style shuffle. It will provide good practice of walking bass line and comping on the "off beats". Another characteristic is a 2-5 turnaround. (Cmin- F7).

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome of 2&4.
- Try to establish a good swing feel between the bass notes and the comping. The swing eighth notes occur between the hands in this style.
- Play the exercise in the different keys also.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try to be aware of where you are placing the right hand comping. Make sure you are laying it right "in the pocket".
- It is common for keyboard players to rush this comping thus diminishing the feel. It is also common for student players to overcompensate for playing on top of the beat by artificially dragging the time.
- This will also diminish the feel. Listen to some recordings and play along, try to "feel" where the "pocket" should be.

## exercise20a-d

### 2 hand funk technique #1

20a half note = 43 4x8

20b 4x8

20c 4x8

20d 4x8

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is good practice for developing independence between hands. It also serves as the basis for many 2 hand funk techniques.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Watch carefully how I play the exercise in the DVD.
- Play with the metronome on 2 and 4.
- Try it in different keys and at different tempos.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Remember that this exercise is about the distribution of the 16th notes over the keyboard with both hands.
- Make sure that you are laying the time right in the pocket.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Make sure that you are using the same fingering that I use in the DVD. This will enable you to create your own patterns and style more easily.

## exercise21

### funk groove1, key G

half note = 43

G7 C7

G7 C7

Eb7 D7 G7

Eb7 D7 G7 Fine

D.C. al Fine

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is good practice at laying down a groove.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play this one with the metronome on 2 and 4.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try to feel where you are laying the sixteenth notes. Make sure that the groove is in the pocket.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to copy the way that I play at first. Pay special attention to the way I "ghost" certain notes. This serves to enhance the feel.

## exercise22a-d

### 2 hand funk technique #2

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This is another 2 hand technique that can serve as a basis for your own style.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2 and 4.
- Try this own hands separately at first.
- Try it in other keys.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Make sure that you are "ghosting" left hand notes with the x note heads.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- This "lick" is great for any dominant seventh chord.

## exercise23a-d

### 2 hand funk technique #3

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise will expose you to yet another 2 hand technique. This one is more difficult than the previous.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2 and 4.
- Try it in other keys. Practice hands separately at first.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- This one is great for minor funk grooves.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- This one can also serve as a basis for your own licks.

## exercise24

### "Roots" rock & roll piano

quarter note = 165

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is really a short rock and roll tune in C. It will expose you to many of the stylistic aspects of "roots" rock piano.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on the quarter note. This will help emphasize the straight eighth feel.

- Try it hands separately at first, you may find this one the most challenging yet.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try to maintain the feel once you can put it together. It is okay to sacrifice a few notes to maintain the integrity of the feel. This style should be driving and rockin'.

- Play aggressively, you need to convey the energy of the style.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Playing aggressively will also help you with the execution of this exercise. This is not a Bach invention or a Chopin nocturne, it's not intended to be pretty. So dig in !!

## exercise25

### Latin comping "Montuno"

quarter note = 165

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is one way to play a Latin "montuno" like pattern. A "montuno" is a comping pattern in Latin styles. I included this one because it is another 2 hand groove and it is fun to play.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on the quarter note.
- Try hands separately if you need to.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Make sure that you are laying the time in the pocket.



## exercise26

### funk groove 2 "Slow super funk"

quarter note = 79

#### MAIN PURPOSE

- This funk groove is an exercise in independence between the hands. It is intended to be challenging. It also contains a few cool licks.

#### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play this one with the metronome on the quarter note.
- Start hands separately at first. Don't try it hands together until you have each hand down by itself.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Don't get frustrated with this one, it is difficult at first.
- As you learn the notes be careful not to start playing it too fast, rushing through the groove.

- Remember being able to groove is not just learning some notes to play in the right order.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to copy how I "ghost" the left hand notes, this is an important aspect of the groove. When you get the notes under your hands make sure that you lay it right in the pocket.



## **PART 4**

### **Jazz Comping / Guide Tone Voicing and Rhythms**

Part 4 is an introduction to jazz guide tone voicings and jazz comping rhythms. We will also cover some walking bass line construction.

Guide tone voicings are made up of the third and seventh of a seventh chord. These 2 notes along with the root are usually enough to define the chord.

What we will be doing in part 4 is applying a voicing technique to a four bar progression made up of "two fives". A minor seventh chord followed by a dominant seventh a fifth below is called a two five. In major key diatonic harmony the chord built on the second degree is always a minor seventh chord.

The chord built on the fifth is always a dominant seventh chord. II-V-I is the most common cadence in jazz and many other styles of music. This cadence can serve as a component or "building block" for many chord progressions. Since many tunes contain two fives is it important to treat them as parts of the language of jazz.

The following exercises will give you a strong beginning in your quest to master the intricacies of jazz harmony at the keyboard. The voicings in the exercises are made up of the third, seventh and one other note. the other note can be a chord tone or a tension. It is important to be able to play the voicings in either hand. Future exercises will incorporate these voicings in to actual tunes. These voicings work especially well for left hand comping.

Syncopated comping rhythms are important also. The exercises serve to develop your ability to internalize the time. Playing with the metronome on 2&4 will also help develop your swing feel.

A "walking" bass lines are made up of constant quarter notes. One way to construct them is to approach each new root by a half step. if the frequency of the chord changes or "harmonic rhythm" is every 2 beats this technique will work well.

Once you understand the exercises harmonically move on to the other keys.

It is very important to have these voicings at your command in all 12 keys.

## Example: Guide Tones and Voicings

Guide tone voicings are made up of the third and seventh plus a chord tone or tension.

Voicing #1 uses the fifth of the minor chord and tension 9 of the dominant chord as a common tone.

Voicing #2 uses tension 9 of the minor chord and tension 13 of the dominant chord. This one sounds a little more "jazzy" due to the use of tensions on all chords.

When voicing chords we try to keep the common tones between the chords. This helps to create good "voice leading". (the least amount of motion between chords)

## exercise27a-b

guide tone voicings(II-V progression with tension 9, key C)

a

half note=55

b: Rhythmic variation.

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This 4 bar exercise will teach you how to voice seventh chords though a progression of two fives. The goal is to memorize the guide tones and tensions of the seventh chords. You should also memorize the voicings and comping rhythm.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Memorize it as quickly as you can.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Remember that the goal is to make this part of your voicing vocabulary and to increase your mastery of the keyboard.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Make sure that you feel the swing and work towards internalizing the time.

## exercise28a-d

guide tone voicings(II-V progression with tension 9 &13, key F)

a half note = 55

b: Rhythmic variation.

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is the 4 bar example in the key of F. This time tension 9 is used on the minor chord and kept as a common tone on the dominant (Tension 13). The rhythmic variation is on the "and" of beat 4.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Memorize it as quickly as you can.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Work towards internalizing the time feel.

## exercise29a-d

guide tone voicings(II-V progression with tension 9, key G)

a half note=55

b: Rhythmic variation.

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is the 4 bar example in the key of G. This voicing again uses the fifth on the minor chord kept as a common tone on the dominant (Tension 9).

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4. Memorize.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Try to visualize the keyboard in your head. You should be able to run through an exercise like this in your head without the keyboard. Try it when you start to gain command of the exercise.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to play the chords in exercise 29b with your left hand alone in the same octave. Try this with the other exercises.

## exercise30a-d

guide tone voicings(II-V progression with tension 9&13, key B)

a half note =55

Emin7 A7 Dmin7 G7 Cmin7 F7 Bbmaj7

b: Rhythmic variation

Emin7 A7 Dmin7 G7 Cmin7 F7 Bbmaj7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is the 4 bar example in the key of B<sup>b</sup>. The tension combination in 9 on the minor chord and 13 on the dominant.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4. Memorize.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- When you have memorized this exercise and the previous 3 begin to transpose it to other keys. Play both voicing positions in all keys.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try going through the keys in this order C, F, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, etc.
- The starting chord of each new key will be an augmented fourth away from the one chord of the new key. For example: in the key of B the starting chord will be Fminor 7, an augmented fourth up from B. The progression will be Fmin7/B<sup>b</sup>7-E<sup>b</sup>min7/A<sup>b</sup>7-C<sup>b</sup>min7/F<sup>b</sup>7-Bmaj7. 3 sets of two fifths resolving down by whole step.
- Don't worry about enharmonic spellings, just get the chords under your fingers.

## exercise31a

ex.27b with "walking" bass

Right hand Tacet 1st time half note =60

Fmin7 B7 Emin7 A7 Dmin7 G7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise will introduce you to one method for constructing "walking" bass lines.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Start with the bass line alone at first, then add the right hand. It is okay to vary the bass line, you don't have to play it exactly the same way each time.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Approach each new root or "target note" by a half step from above or below.
- Don't try to play along exactly with me in the DVD, try to create your own based on what I play.
- Remember that a "walking" bass line at this tempos made up of constant quarter notes. In the DVD I add some ornamental eighth notes. I included a few in the booklet.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try to make the exercise swing, be aware of where you are placing the time.

## exercise31b

ex.28b with "walking" bass

Right hand tacet 1st. time half note=60

Bmin7 E7 Amin7 D7 Gmin7

C7 Fmaj7 Bmin7 E7 Amin7

D7 Gmin7 C7 Fmaj7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This is another example of playing a "walking" bass line against a syncopated comping rhythm.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Start with the left hand first. Add the right hand when you are comfortable with the left.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Be careful not to rush this one.
- You may slightly accent beats 2&4 in you left hand. This will help emphasis the swing feel.

## exercise31c

ex.29b with "walking" bass

half note = 60

C#min7 F#7 Bmin7 E7 Amin7

right hand tacet 1st. time

D7 Gmaj7 C#min7 F#7 Bmin7

E7 Amin7 D7 Gmaj7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is the "walking" bass example in the key of G.

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Start with the left hand. Add the right when you are comfortable with the left.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Again be careful to emphasis the swing feel.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try different touches in the right hand. Staccato, long short, short long etc.



## exercise31d

ex.30b with "walking" bass

right hand tacet 1st. time      half note = 60

Emin7 A7 Dmin7 G7 Cmin7 F7

Bbmaj7 Emin7 A7 Dmin7 G7

Cmin7 F7 Bbmaj7

### MAIN PURPOSE

- This exercise is the example in the key of B $\flat$ .

### WAYS TO PRACTICE

- Play the exercise with the metronome on 2&4.
- Start with the left hand then add the right.

### IMPORTANT POINTS

- Transpose this and the previous 3 exercises to all 12 keys.

### ADDITIONAL POINTS

- Try combining the rhythmic variations in the same exercise. Then create your own comping rhythms against the bass line.

## ABOUT EACH DEMONSTRATION

### demonstration 1

#### Blues Styles

(Texas Shuffle, Chicago Shuffle, Boogie Woogie, New Orleans Rumba)

This performance demonstrates several "blues" piano styles.

I begin with a "Texas" style shuffle in the key of G. This style is influenced by the playing of Floyd Dixon.

I switch gears a little into a "Chicago" style shuffle influenced by Otis Spann also in G.

I then move to a Boogie Woogie "roots rock and roll" style influenced by Professor Longhair in the key of E $\flat$ .

This segues to a New Orleans Rumba style also influenced by Professor Longhair in F.

It is important to point out that the my intention with these performances is simply to expose you to the differences in the feel, groove and technique of these essential piano styles.

Listen to great influential players like the above mentioned and; Johnnie Johnson, Pinetop Perkins, James Booker, Dr. John, etc. Learn some of their performances, try to copy every nuance and subtlety of the feel. Understand that it more about expression and feel than technique.

### demonstration 2

#### Rock Styles

(American rock, "Roots" Rock & Roll)

In this performance I demonstrate several "classic rock" piano styles.

I begin with a groove influenced by Elton John in the key of G.

This moves into a more active groove also influenced by Elton. Other influences I draw from are Chuck Laevell, Billy Powell, Steve Winwood, etc. This groove gets explored a bit in part 2 as it is a great vehicle for rock improvisation on piano.

I conclude the performance with a "roots" rock and roll example in the key of C. This is in the style of Jerry Lee Lewis and Little Richard. I feel that it very important to learn by ear a few performances by those 2 players. Add Johnnie Johnson to that list also.

This performance is a little different than exercise 24, but it has the same spirit.

### **demonstration 3**

#### **Funk Style (Comping and Improvisation)**

This performance demonstrates some classic funk styles on the Fender Rhodes piano.

I begin with a Herbie Hancock influenced groove in E<sup>b</sup>.

This develops into a Billy Preston type groove. I then modulate to F for a more Richard Tee influenced groove.

Notice in this performance many of the 2 hand funk techniques that are covered in part 3. Pay careful attention to levels of inter dynamics, (different dynamic levels between hands and within a phrase) accents and "ghost" notes.

Also notice that maintaining the integrity of the groove is very important.

Playing with a metronome should not be a quest to have metronomic time. It should serve as a point of reference to judge your time. You can learn what it feels like to be "in the pocket". What it feels like when you are pushing or pulling the time. You can even learn to play one hand slightly ahead or behind the other to create different nuances in the groove.

### **demonstration 4**

#### **Jazz Changes (Comping and Improvisation)**

In this demonstration I play some standard chord changes in F. My intention is to expose you to some different chord voicings and jazz swing feel.

I play some left hand voicings during the improvisation that are based on the voicings in part 4. Notice that it is very important to master the exercises in part 4.

Playing a progression with chromatic two fives like this one requires an intimate knowledge of seventh chords and tension combinations. Chromatic two fives are a sequence of minor seventh chords followed by dominant seventh chords descending in half steps. Two fives are an important component of jazz harmony.

### **demonstration 5**

**"Just Funky"** composed by Tomo Fujita

### **CONCLUSION**

I hope you enjoyed working with me. I believe strongly in the concepts in this DVD. I hope that you continue the exercises that I specified for all keys. Take your time and listen to great players constantly. Learn great performances by ear. Start with simple ones and work your way up. Try to have a "tune of the week" that you chip away at. Don't be overly concerned with how you compare with other players. Remember that the goal is to make music. Music doesn't exist at only one level of technical proficiency. You can express yourself at any level.

You will begin to hear the harmonic and technical concepts in this DVD in other recordings. I tried to find some common threads that capture the essence of styles. When you listen to great blues players you will hear Mixolydian thirds and blues technique. When you listen to rock you will hear rock motives and rock comping. When you listen to funk listen for funk technique and Mixolydian triads. In jazz performances you should hear guide tone voicings, especially in left hand comping.

Remember that the exercises in this DVD are just the beginning, always be true to your own style. Remember that the goal is beyond the notes, the music is greater than the technical task your hands are performing. If the process isn't fun you probably aren't listening to enough great music. Get inspired again and have fun with it!

If you would like to continue studies with me please feel free to visit my web site. ,

<davelimina.com>

I am available for correspondence lessons by mail or in person in Boston.

Please visit my web site for information on my other books.

Keep on Groovin'!!!



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## PROFILE

Dave Limina has been a faculty member at Berklee College of Music since 1993 and has been an Assistant professor since 1999. During that time he has been a consistently sought after teacher for private piano studies. At Berklee, Dave has maintained a full schedule of classes and private lessons, he is always one of the first teachers to "fill up" due to student requests.

Dave has designed one of Berklee's most popular labs for keyboard players-Roots/Rock. It is an in depth study of American improvisational piano styles such as: blues, New Orleans, boogie woogie and gospel. He has developed a vast curriculum for this course and will soon release much of it in book form. Since first offered in 1994, this course has grown in popularity and hundreds of students have been exposed to "Roots" style through study with Dave.

Dave designed the curriculum for Berklee's first Hammond organ course, "Hammond Organ Techniques". He began teaching the class as a prototype. He donated the use of his own Hammond to get the program going. Student response was overwhelming and there are now many sections of the techniques class as well as a "rock styles for Hammond organ" course that Dave also teaches. The courses exposes students to B3 history and playing techniques in a variety of styles.

Dave has taught hundreds of students at Berklee, leading them through the study of jazz, blues, rock and pop style. He also offers a great amount of classical experience to students.

Also Dave has performed all over the world in a variety of musical situations, and has many recording and jingle credits include appearances with Mighty Sam McClain, Michelle Willson, B.B. King, Chuck Berry, The Coasters, Courage Brothers, Brooke Benton, Paula Cole, Warren Hill, Steve Forbert, Martha Reeves, Duke Robillard, Barrence Whitfield, Tracy Nelson, Grammy award winning songwriters Gary Nicholson and R.L. Kass, and a long stint as the conductor and the keyboard player for the national cast of the Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize Winning Musical "RENT".

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## Special Thanks

I would like to thank most of all my Father God for providing me with all that is good and the challenges I learn from in this life.

I would also like to thank the following people who made this DVD possible:

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My family.

Paul Schmelling for the opportunity to teach at Berklee.

Michelle Willson for the opportunity to play great music with great musicians.

All my students for your support.

And last but not least my wife Amy Beth for playing all the Classic Elton stuff for me.

This DVD is dedicated to the memory of my father Anthony M.Limina.